

Kyodan

News Letter

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challenging the vocabulary of discrimination

The Tokugawa regime, which ruled Japan from 1600 to 1868, instituted a hierarchy of classes. It placed at the bottom persons in occupations involving animal slaughter, leather curing and similar work, who lived together in their own communities. In the Meiji era (1871), the stratification was abolished; nevertheless discrimination continued, linked to social, economic and political forms, and it persists in "modern Japan." The word buraku means community. It was originally used as a euphemism to refer to persons discriminated against without mentioning the reason for the discrimination.

The following report was contributed by Prof. Akio Dohi of Doshisha School of Theology. It is followed by a comment on recent developments in the Kyodan with regard to the buraku problem. (The background for the use of hisabetsu buraku and other terms is given in a box on page 2.)

The Christians' Buraku Liberation Conference Rally was held April 29 at the Osaka St. John's Church, Anglican, with about 80 persons present.

Chairman Rev. Kanichi Nishimura took as his text for the opening service, "The Good Samaritan," tackling the question of whether Christians are good neighbors with regard to the hisabetsu buraku people.

The Rev. Hiromichi Okamura of Nishi Ogikubo Church took up "problems in the Sayama case." This case, which has continued from 1963 up through the present, involved a murder suspect who is of the buraku community. Okamura made clear how, in this case, both the police and the judges have made use of the general public's prejudice and discriminatory attitude toward buraku people.

What emerged as a major problem at this rally was the use in Christian churches and Christian schools of words either directly or metaphorically discriminatory. It was noted that the same mistakes are committed

frequently by Christian leaders well known for their support of human freedom and equality. Why is this so? Christians wrestling with the buraku issue will be making a point of this in the coming months.

Finally it was agreed that the buraku problem is not something outside the church but something that must be taken up as an activity of the church. While saying "we're all Christians," some are struggling seriously with it but the majority are entirely unaware of it.

Thus it is a problem based in the social structure of Japan and the mentality of Japanese, who are utterly unconscious of the discrimination inherent in expressions they use. Christians are no exception.

What is their understanding of Christianity? How can we raise the consciousness of Christians with regard to buraku problems so they become involved in working for the goal of buraku liberation? This will be our main thrust from now on.

During May representatives of buraku liberation groups talked with Kyodan leaders. At the July Executive Committee meeting the officers will present a bill calling for establishment, within the framework of the Kyodan, of a "desk" to deal with the buraku issue.

Words and Their Connotations

The word BURAKU (community) has been used as a euphemism to designate communities whose people were and are discriminated against, without referring to the basis of discrimination. BURAKU PEOPLE denotes people whose families were once identified with these communities, whether they continue to live in the communities or not, all being subject to many forms of social and economic discrimination. BURAKU KAIHO 解放 (liberation) refers to the liberation of these persons from discrimination of all kinds. MIKAIHO 未解放 (not-yet-liberated) BURAKU is currently used, although some feel that other groups too are not yet liberated and that HISABETSU 被差別 (those-who-are-the-recipients-of-discrimination) BURAKU best points directly to the buraku problem and from the position of those discriminated against. The term DOWA is derived from DOHO ITSUWA 同胞一和 used by the Showa Emperor at the time of his inauguration in 1928 to indicate solidarity among all citizens. When used as a buraku-related term, it indicates relations to government policy. Terms other than these have discriminatory implications because they reflect government policies felt to have contributed to and intensified discrimination and oppression. Of these, TOKUSHU 特殊 (special) BURAKU is considered most disrespectful, stemming from a government policy that implied BURAKU PEOPLE were "special" or "different," disregarding historical realities.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

A slate of nominees for the membership of the Kyodan's Standing Committees will be presented to the Executive Committee for confirmation at its July 14-15 meeting.

Approval of the names would pave the way for the reactivating of the 10 committees and commissions, whose activities have been more or less frozen since January 1974. Members elected in 1968 had continued to serve in the absence of a General Assembly able to conduct new elections.

The Nominating Committee, which was appointed by the 1974 General Assembly, met June 2-4 to determine policies for the selections and then build the committee memberships. The final list of 82 persons was drawn up within the following guidelines:

- awareness of the issues that became apparent through the 17th and 18th General Assemblies and of the decisions of those Assemblies
- selection of committees that do not represent a particular bias
- selection of committees with wide geographic representation
- selection of new people
- selection of a person to only one committee
- selection of persons with some degree of specialization

The following are the Standing Committees:

- Commission on Faith and Order
- Commission on the Ministry
- Commission for the Examination of Financial Reports
- Commission on Ministerial Qualifications
- Commission on the Mission of the Church
- Committee on Evangelism
- Committee on Education
- Committee on Social Concerns
- Committee for Ecumenical Ministries

CCA APPOINTS MAMORU TSUDA

The General Committee of the Christian Council in Asia, meeting in Singapore in March, appointed Mamoru Tsuda, a member of the Tokyo Matsuzawa Kyodan Church, as new education secretary, succeeding the Rev. John England, whose term expires this summer.

Tsuda was chosen for the post to provide the balance of nationalities desired on the CCA staff but also because of the very enthusiastic recommendation given him by young people in the Philippines, where he has been studying for the past several years.

Mr. Makoto Midzuno notes that this appointment is very significant, considering the present position of Japan in Asia and the antagonism of people in many countries toward Japan.

While studying in the Department of Education of Aoyama Gakuin University, Mamoru became aware of the problems of Asia education through his studies in comparative education under Dr. John Skillman.

After graduation in 1971 and a period of research at Tokyo University, he went to the Philippines to study and this summer will complete work for a master's degree in sociology.

Mamoru comes from a family with a long history in education. His grand aunt was Umeko Tsuda, founder of Tsuda College. His father is Prof. Noboru Tsuda, lecturer in international trade at Senshu University.

Faculty and classmates recall that Tsuda was not particularly well known during his Aoyama days but that after he went to the Philippines, he sent back many essays about his experience.

While he lacks the theological training of his predecessor, he enters the CCA at a time when the focus will be on "living theology," particularly in terms of the priorities of hunger and human rights.



NEW -- HORIZONS

"How about theological education in Thailand?" we asked the Rev. Kenichi Mochizuki, as he was about to depart for Thailand with his family to resume work as a teacher at the Thailand Theological Seminary as a Kyodan missionary to the Church of Christ in Thailand.

"First," said Mochizuki, "when thinking about theological education in Thailand, it is necessary to think about it in context--the context of East Asia. This is basic, whether we are considering the purpose, curriculum, kind of ministry, or nurture of the new leadership for that ministry."

One dominant characteristic of East Asia is rapid change. Mochizuki pointed to Vietnam as an example of the waves of revolution, liberation, reconstruction and development engulfing Asian societies.

The seminary must produce pastors able to minister to Thai people living in such a rapidly changing society, Mochizuki said. It must also produce Thai theologians able to interpret the meaning of these events and consider what the responsibility of the church is, and what its relation should be to the political and economic affairs of the nation. "If the church is indifferent, it cannot be the 'salt' in an authentic way. Thus, these are times of tremendous challenge to theological education," he said.

A central emphasis in Thailand, as in other East Asian countries, is development of an indigenous theology, a theology that speaks to the Thai people in their own situation and setting. Toward this end, both the Theological Education Fund and the Foundation for Theological Education in East Asia are helping strengthen theological courses at the seminary.

In addition to his academic work, Mochizuki is engaged in another aspect of the church's education program--literature projects being carried on by the Department of Christian Education and Literature of the Church of Christ in Thailand and the seminary.

Until recently the Christian population, a small minority in the predominantly Buddhist population, has had little Christian literature--little in translation, even less in writings for the Thai people, in the Thai language, by Thai writers. Now, two publication projects are under way, aided by the Theological Education Fund.

One is a series of five books for the laity. Mochizuki is the author of the first one, God, Man and Society. The other four are by Thai authors.

The second literature project is publication of the first Dictionary of Thai Theological and Philosophical Terms, a necessary first step to the formulation of Thai theology. Research is now under way, with the Seminary's Department of Christian Education and Literature and Buddhist scholars of Dharma Logos Institute working in close cooperation.

How does Mochizuki see his role, in a church working toward indigenization?

"My task is to be with the Thai Christians, to find my own identity with the Thai people, not merely in my own Japaneseness.

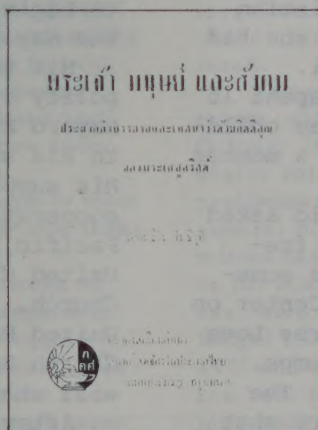
When I am accepted--when they accept me--then we will together discover new horizons.

Asked for his views on theological education in Japan, Mochizuki said he did not feel qualified to talk about the current problems because of his absence for seven years. But he did make a few comments, from his Asian perspective and furlough contacts.

"I always feel that theological education in Japan should be more ecumenically-oriented," he said. "By this I mean that it should not concentrate just on the problems of Japanese churches, although these are important, but should take up the problems of Christians living in other parts of the world--Africa, Latin America and, especially, fellow Christians in Asia.

"It is not enough to bear our own burdens; we must take up the burdens of others. We need to open our eyes and minds to the problems of Christians and men of other faiths in other countries so we can discover real ecumenical cooperation. If we are to experience theological renewal, the ecumenical dimension is essential."

Mochizuki said he felt encouraged by efforts he found at TOTS and Doshisha to raise the world awareness of young pastors.



RETURN TO JAPAN

Wakkanai, Japan's northernmost city, is a windy place, slashed by gales blowing across the Sakhalin Straits.

Until 1972, the U.S. Air Force maintained a base at Wakkanai, on the point beyond the docks and fishing village.

In December, 1966, David Thompson arrived at the Wakkanai base. He was 18 and had just graduated from high school and joined the Air Force.

A strange land, a language he did not understand, no place to go. For 10 months, David hardly left the base, although he did join the chapel choir.

Another choir member had ventured off base, however. Mrs. Johnson, British wife of a serviceman, was involved in English classes in Wakkanai and invited David to attend, giving him his first entre into Japanese society.

One day Mrs. Johnson invited David to go with her to Nayoro--3 hours away--to visit the Dohoku Christian Center and the Howletts, whom she had met when they visited Wakkanai.

Doreen and Floyd (who had spent 15 years in Japan) and their three children quickly accepted David as a member of the family.

After the first visit, David asked if he could come back, and he frequently did. There was always something going on at the Dohoku Center on the outskirts of the city--Three Love Institute programs, English camps, courses in homemaking skills. The staff comprised a team ministry that served a circuit of small churches, preaching points and home meetings.

Sometimes David made the rounds with sandy-haired, steady Floyd, who filled the shoes of pastor, farmer, social reformer, counsellor.

David made friends at the Center and in the community. "I keep kicking myself for the 10 months I wasted staying on base when there was all this waiting for me outside," he used to tell the Howletts.

But only five months after he "found" Nayoro, he was transferred to

Germany. There he immediately began to move off base, to study German, to learn about the history and culture of Germany. When the Howlett family visited Frankfurt on their way to Canada on furlough he was their guide.

In 1971 David returned to the U.S. and, a civilian again, entered Marshall University in West Virginia, majoring in elementary education. He sang in the church choir, taught Sunday school, and held various part-time jobs.

In December, 1963, David received the Howletts' printed Christmas letter, with its last sentence: "If you know of anyone interested in teaching at the Nayoro English Center beginning in the summer of 1975...."

David hurried off a reply... "How about me?" As a result, David is leaving Japan right after graduation to begin a 3-year missionary term at the Nayoro English Center.

His assignment dramatizes the COC policy of shared support, for the Nayoro English Center will contribute to his salary and provide housing. His support plan also represents wide cooperation on the other side of the Pacific, where American Baptists, the United Church of Canada, the Christian Church, the United Presbyterians, the United Methodist Church and the United Church Board for World Ministries will share in his support.

After a short introductory course in Japanese, he will begin teaching at the Nayoro English Center, which has some four hundred students, from elementary through adult, in afternoon and evening classes, and is run by the Dohoku Center.

This time David comes to Japan hoping, he says, "to be a good English teacher, a good witness for Christ in word and deed in every facet of relationships in Japan, and unofficial ambassador, promoting good Japanese-American relationships through the mutual sharing of cultures."